

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**Douglas Public School District  
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2006-2007**

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**Dates of On Site Visit:** September 25, 26, and 27, 2006

**Date of Report:** October 3, 2006

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This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

<b>Promising Practice</b>	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
<b>Meets Requirements</b>	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
<b>Out of Compliance</b>	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
<b>Not applicable</b>	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

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<b>Principle 1 – General Supervision</b>
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

**Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- State data table C – Suspension and Expulsion Information
- State data table F – Placement Alternatives
- State data table G – Disabling Conditions

- Surveys
- Comprehensive Plan
- Needs Assessment Information (such as personnel, facilities, etc)
- Screening

### **Meets requirements**

The Douglas School District has an established and effectively implemented ongoing child find system to locate, identify, and evaluate children with disabilities, ages birth through 21 years, who may need special education. The district does have an effective pre-referral and referral system in place which ensures students are identified without unnecessary delay.

The district has no private schools; however, if the district did, it would provide for children with disabilities that are eligible for special education and are voluntarily enrolled in private schools by their parents to participate in services in accordance with the requirements of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

The Douglas School District does use data-based decision making procedures to review and analyze school district level data to determine if the district is making progress towards the state's performance goals and indicators. Limited "N" sizes always present a problem in tracking how students are doing with regards to graduation and dropout rates for all students, especially students with disabilities.

The district has had one student in five years that met suspension/expulsion requirements. The district does review and analyze discipline data. This data is used to revise policies and procedures as necessary.

The Douglas School District does ensure that staff hired, employed, or contracted with are appropriately supervised, and fully licensed to work with children with disabilities. It should be noted that despite active recruiting efforts, the district has not been able to employ sufficient numbers of certified speech therapists. The Douglas School District does determine personnel development needs of staff and provides staff development opportunities to meet those identified needs.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Promising practice**

The review team validated the district's Pre-referral Intervention Team (PIT) as a promising practice. Before a student is referred to the PIT process, the teacher contacts the parents and discusses the areas of concern. The teacher gets the parents' input and keeps them informed of things the teacher will be trying. If the strategies the teacher is using are not working, they contact the parents and let them know the student is going to be referred to the PIT team. The parents are invited to be a part of the PIT team discussion. If the parent can not attend, the teacher asks for input. The PIT team meets and discusses what strategies have been tried and what has worked and what has not worked. The team looks at the documentation from the teacher and discusses what strategies the classroom teacher will use with each student. One or two strategies are decided on. If the parent does not attend the meeting, the teacher calls the parents and lets them know what has been decided. The teacher goes back and implements the strategies. Documentation is kept on how the strategies are affecting the students learning. The strategies are usually implemented for 4-6 weeks. During this time the special education teacher, principal or another general education teacher comes in and observes the classroom teacher to make sure the strategies are being implemented correctly and to see if they are working. After the 4-6 week period is up, the PIT team meets again and discusses what worked and what didn't. If

the strategies worked, the teacher/ team will continue to monitor the student to make strategies continue to be effective and no other issues arise. If the strategies did not work and the team feels the student should be referred to the referral process, the parents are contacted and the referral process is started. The PIT team is used for academic and behavioral issues.

#### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements for Principle One: General Supervision, as concluded by the steering committee.

## **Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education**

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

#### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- State data table C – Suspension and Expulsion Information
- State data table F – Placement Alternatives
- State data table I - Placement Data
- State data table K – Early Intervention (Part C) Exit Information
- State data table L – Complaints
- State data table M – Hearings
- Family Education Right and Privacy Act (FERPA) Notice
- Surveys
- Comprehensive Plan

#### **Meets requirements**

The Douglas School District does ensure students with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled are being provided FAPE base on the district's comprehensive plan and file review.

#### **Needs improvement**

The Douglas School District does provide a free appropriate public education to all children. However, based on file reviews extended school year procedures and the process need to be examined.

#### **Validation Results**

**Promising practice**

Douglas High School provides students with a state of the art learning center, which is available to and used by all students. The Learning Center is located next to the study hall and is staffed with three teachers, one who is a certified teacher who is in the learning center throughout the school day. Two hours a day, a language arts teacher is available to the students, for two hours a math teacher, and two hours another content area teacher. Other staff personnel are available according to study hall assignments. All high school students at Douglas have a chance to receive individual assistance with assignments from 7:30 AM to 3:45 PM. The two-hour blocks of specialized help and the fact that there is no distinction as to which students are making use of the learning center earned this a vote of promising practice.

All 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders at Douglas High School can earn a credit for participation in a “course” called Student Aides. These students work for various teachers doing such jobs as copying, picking up and delivering homework, filing, etc. Training is provided, and if students work in the office or for the counselor, they are instructed in confidentiality and must sign a confidentiality statement. The team deemed this to be a promising practice because of the training involved; because participation in this course can provide students with a chance to gain a personal view of various careers in the education field; and due to the fact that for students on an IEP, it may be a transition activity.

**Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements for Principle Two: Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), as concluded by the steering committee.

<b>Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation</b>
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A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

**Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Student File Reviews
- Prior Notice
- Telephone Log
- Evaluation Report
- Surveys
- Comprehensive Plan
- Parents Rights Brochure

**Promising practice**

Based on file reviews the Douglas School District provides written notice and obtains informed consent before assessments are administered to a child as a part of the evaluation or reevaluation process. The district's procedure for gaining consent from parents is a promising practice.

#### **Meets requirements**

Based on file review and the comprehensive plan, Douglas School District ensures the evaluation and reevaluation procedures and instruments meet the minimum requirements. The Douglas School District ensures the proper identification of students with disabilities through the evaluation process. In addition, the Douglas School District ensures that reevaluations are conducted in accordance with all procedural requires to ensure students are appropriately evaluated for continuing eligibility.

#### **Validation Results**

##### **Promising practice**

The monitoring team was not able to validate the district's procedure for gaining consent from parents as a promising practice. The provision of parental consent is a requirement.

##### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting the requirement for Principle Three: Appropriate Evaluation.

### **Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards**

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

#### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- State data table L - Complaints
- State data table M – Hearings
- Teacher File Reviews
- Surveys
- Comprehensive Plan
- Parental Rights document
- Consent and Prior Notice forms
- Family Education Right and Privacy Act (FERPA) disclosure

##### **Meets requirements**

The Douglas District ensures parents are informed of their parental rights under Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) The school district's comprehensive plan outlines procedures to ensure the rights of children if no parent is identified.

The school district's comprehensive plan provides procedures on procedural safeguards, which provides the parents of a child in need of special education or special education and related services with the opportunity to inspect and review all educational records concerning the identification, evaluation, and

educational placement of the child and the provision of a free appropriate public education. The comprehensive plan outlines policies and procedures for responding to complaints and due process hearing.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Meets requirements**

The review team agrees with the steering committee that data for Principle Four: Procedural Safeguards meets requirements, with the exception of consent for evaluation. See information under: Out of Compliance

#### **Out of compliance**

##### **ARSD 24:05:25:16 Parent Participation**

Each district shall ensure that one or both parents of the child are present at each IEP team meeting or are afforded the opportunity to participate. The district shall notify parents of the meeting early enough to ensure that they will have an opportunity to attend, and scheduling the meeting at a mutually agreed-upon time and place. The notice to the parents shall state the purpose, time, location of the IEP meeting and who will be in attendance and inform the parents of the provisions relating to the participants of the other individuals on the IEP team who have knowledge or special expertise about the child.

Student file reviews did not provide the parent accurate information as to who would be in attendance at the child's IEP meeting. In student files 1, 9, 20, 22, 24, 27, 30, 31, 32, 42, and 43, the special education clerk (secretary) was in attendance at the meeting, but was not listed on the Prior Notice.

## **Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program**

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- State data table K – Early Intervention (Part C) Exit Information
- Student File Reviews
- Prior Notice Form
- IEP Form
- Surveys
- Parents Rights Brochure

#### **Meets requirements**

The Douglas School District ensures that written notice is provided for all IEP meetings, and includes all required content. In files reviewed by the district, the IEP team is comprised of appropriate team membership and meets all identified responsibilities, and that the IEP contains all required content. The district has policies and procedures in place to ensure an appropriate IEP is developed and in effect for each eligible student

In addition, file reviews completed by the district support transition plans for students are a coordinated set of activities, reflecting student strengths and interests, to prepare them for post school activities.

## **Validation Results**

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that data for Principle Five: Individualized Education Program meets requirements, except in the areas of IEP team membership, description of services and location and graduation requirements. See information under: Out of Compliance.

### **Out of Compliance**

#### **ARSD 24:05:27:01.01 and ARSD 24:05:25:16.01 Team membership at IEP meetings**

The district shall ensure the IEP team for each student includes parents, administrator, special education, regular education, and other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the student. If the purpose of the IEP team meeting is the consideration of transition services needs or transition services for the student, the notice must identify any other agency that is likely to be responsible for providing or paying for transition service and will be invited to send a representative.

In student files 4, 32, and 34, the child's general education teacher was not in attendance at the IEP meeting. The district administrator or designee was not in attendance at student 2, 5, 21, and 30's IEP meeting. In addition, for students who are in need of transition services, files did not support other agencies were invited to the student's IEP meeting (i.e. vocational rehabilitation, guidance counselor, etc.). Staff interviews also indicated lack of familiarity with what outside agencies requirements are for people with disabilities age 16 and older.

#### **ARSD 24:05:27:01.03 Content of individualized education program (IEP)**

A student's IEP must contain a statement of the student's special education and related services provided to the student. The student's IEP must also indicate the location of those services.

#### **Initiation, Frequency, Location and Duration of Services 300.320 (a)(7) Comment**

What is required is the IEP include information about the amount of services that will be provided to the child, so that the level of the agency's commitment of resources will be clear to parents and other IEP Team members. The amount of time to be committed to each the various services to be provided must be appropriate to the specific service and clearly state in the IEP in a manner that can be understood by all involved in the development and implementation of the IEP.

In student files 3, 4, 27, 28, 31, 34, 39, and 40, a description of the child's special education service was not provided to give parents a full explanation of the makeup of services. In one student file, the description was "2100 hrs/wk in special education resource room." In student files 18, 38, 39, 40, and 46 the location of services is stated as, "therapy or classroom." In both of these situations, the parents have not been given enough information to ensure parents have a clear understanding of the services being provided or the location of services.

### **Issues requiring immediate attention**

#### **ARSD 24:05:27:12 Graduation requirements**

Completion of an approved secondary special education program with a regular school diploma signifies that the student no longer requires special education services. The instructional program shall be specified on the IEP. The IEP shall state specifically how the student in need of special education or special education and related services will satisfy the district's graduation requirements. Parents must be informed through the IEP process at least one year in advance of the intent to graduate their child upon completion of the IEP and to terminate services by graduation.

Through staff interviews and file documentation, the review team noted one student (#32) on an IEP who is scheduled to graduate in May 2007. The student's IEP does not state specifically how the student will satisfy the district's graduation requirements. The district needs to conduct an IEP meeting for this student as soon as possible to address specifically how the student in need of special education or special education and related services will satisfy the district's graduation requirements.

## **Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment**

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- State data table F – Placement Alternatives
- State data table G – Disabling Conditions
- State data table I – Placement by Age
- State data table J – Placement by Disabling Condition
- Student File Reviews
- Parent, Student, and General Educator's Surveys
- Personnel Training
- Comprehensive Plan

### **Meets requirements**

The Douglas School District ensures through file reviews and the comprehensive plan that all children receive the supports they need to be successful in the least restrictive environment.

### **Validation Results**

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with the steering committee that the district is meeting the requirements for Principle Six: Least Restrictive Environment.